

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Joe Courtney, a member of the House Armed Services Committee and co-chairman of the Congressional Shipbuilding Conference, today represented Connecticut at the commissioning of the USS Mississippi - the Navy's newest Virginia-class submarine - in Pascagoula, Miss. The submarine was constructed at Groton-based Electric Boat, and was completed a year ahead of schedule and \$65 million under budget.

Congressman Courtney's remarks from the commissioning, as prepared for delivery, are below:

"Thank you Congressman Palazzo for your kind introduction and thank you to all of the dignitaries on the stage today. Looking at the line up of distinguished public officials from Mississippi, I am particularly honored to have a moment as the Congressman from southeastern Connecticut where this amazing boat was built to congratulate the people of Mississippi at the beginning of a new chapter in your glorious history of protecting and defending our nation.

"You know, we live in a time when, unfortunately, way too much emphasis is placed on labels that divide us. You know what I mean – red state, blue state, north, south, right, left.

"Today's commissioning of this amazing boat defies that relentless negativity. Here is a submarine built in Connecticut from parts supplied from all over America - including right here in Mississippi – in collaboration with our sister shipyard in Virginia and manned by a crew from over a dozen different states. This boat before us represents the hard work and ingenuity of thousands of men and women who, every day, from its keel laying in 2007 to its commissioning today June 2, 2012, transcended all the divisive labels to build this mighty machine.

"Even more to the point, in the near future when this submarine will go on its first patrol, all those aboard – from Captain McGrath down to the most junior sailor – will not be thinking about defending just one segment of our country, but all of us. Ultimately, that truth trumps all the cheap cynicism that tries to divide us.

"So, from here on out, the Magnolia state and the Nutmeg state will share a special bond as the USS Mississippi embarks on her undersea mission. And, she will serve as a reminder to us all – designers, engineers, welders, suppliers, crew members, sponsors, taxpayers and even Members of Congress who disagree from time to time – that while we may be separated by geography and accent, at the end of the day, when we stand together as Americans, there is nothing that can hold us back."

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